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MODERN FRENCH
ENGRAVING

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FOREWORD

THE exhibition of French Book Illustration organized by The Arts Council and held at the National Gallery and in various provincial galleries during 1945 was remarkable as much for the technical virtuosity of the plates as for the sumptuous quality of the books themselves. In particular the notable volumes illustrated by Picasso, Rouault, Derain and Matisse were appreciated for a standard of production which clearly had derived from years of preparatory work and the most interesting technical experiments.

The present exhibition aims at initiating those interested in these books into the technical processes behind these dazzling results as achieved by that veritable impresario in this field, Roger Lacourière. In a recent course at the Anglo-French Art Centre he demonstrated all his methods in the fullest detail and he has most generously allowed us to retain the various specimens of his skill for this exhibition.

The nature of the various processes has been ably explained by Mr. John Buckland-Wright in the following pages and he has also prepared some actual plates with which to reinforce his written descriptions.

P. J.

INTRODUCTION

IN 1900, when Ambroise Vollard, one of the most famous art dealers of modern times, published his first book, Verlaine's *Parallèlement* with lithographs by Pierre Bonnard, he began a new era in French book production. He had, since the beginning of his career, wanted to publish books and as his life was spent among pictures they had, of course, to be picture books. Instead of going to the professional engravers for the illustrations, he naturally turned to the painters he knew and admired, regardless of the fact that they might never have used copper, wood or stone before. To start with, being the best painters they were obviously the best draughtsmen, and if, as Ingres said, it takes thirty years to learn to draw and three days to learn to paint, much the same might apply in the case of etching and engraving, allowing perhaps a month instead of the three days. The different processes, formidable and complicated as they may seem in theory, are simple and straightforward in practice. It is, in the end, merely a question of drawing and courage; the type of courage exemplified by Rouault, whom Vollard met one day with a whole packet of files, scrapers, gravers and emery paper, and when asked what he proposed to do with them, replied 'They're for your blasted plates. Etchings, aquatints? Call them what you like. I'm given a copper plate. . . . I just get on with it.'

Vollard issued twenty-seven books during his lifetime and at his death had another two dozen in preparation. Among the latter was the magnificent *Georgiques* of Virgil with etchings by Segonzac, some of which are in this exhibition. At first Vollard had some difficulty in selling his books; one of the very finest, the *Daphnis and Chloe* illustrated by Bonnard and published at the equivalent of eight pounds, took twenty years to sell out. But the tide turned and it was found that these books possessed a gold value in a world of financial instability, and from that moment they became rarities on the market and every new publication was oversubscribed before it appeared.

Vollard's example has been followed by many editors with varying success and is responsible for the very large production of *de luxe* editions in Paris since the war. Though only a few come up to the high standard set by Vollard, they are invaluable in providing a wonderful incentive to inspiration and experiment to artists and are partly responsible for helping to keep Paris, in spite of her difficulties, at the head of the cultural world.

The tradition of French book production has always accorded first place to illustration with the result that some of their publications have been little more than texts acting as an excuse for a series of engravings. In this country we are more practical. We prefer our books to have a unity in which every part is subordinated to the whole. Within these limits we produce some that are very good, but we have not sufficient collectors willing to back their belief in our own artists to the extent of making books, illustrated regardless of cost, a commercial proposition.

Such books, generally illustrated with engravings, require besides the artist, a first-class copperplate printer. Paris has many such *imprimeurs en taille douce*, as they are called; excellent craftsmen such as *le pere* Fort, who printed a great number of Picasso's etchings, and the cheerful little hunch-back Brunel who used to print for Segonzac. But none, however capable, have reached the status of artist or have attained the outstanding position of Roger Lacourière. He would be unique in any country and age and only Paris could have produced him. Born in Montmartre, he is the son and grandson of professional etchers and engravers, men who made their living, before the advent of photography, engraving the lovely coloured plates for the fashion publications which are nowadays often collected for their beauty of style and technique. His apprenticeship was long and arduous and often went against the grain, but the result was responsible for the expert artist and craftsman that Lacourière is today. Recently, after looking at some prints in the studio of an English engraver, he asked to see the tools with which the work had been done. Picking up a burin, whose cutting edge should be kept at razor sharpness, he said 'If my father had found me using a burin like that he'd have kicked me out. You must be a good artist. Only a good artist can do perfect work with bad tools.'

In the last twenty years nearly every artist of any standing has found his way sooner or later to Lacourière's studio on the *Butte* Montmartre. If he has illustrations to print Lacourière will pull him a *bon à imprimer* or sample proof which gives the fullest value to his work and could not be bettered. The plates can then be handed over to the small band of trained printers who, under Lacourière's supervision, will pull off the edition. If he is in doubt about technique, Lacourière will solve his difficulties, giving him any pointers he may need on line engraving, drypoint, etching, soft ground, aquatint or mezzotint. All the tools and appliances are there and a quick masterly demonstration will save the artist weeks of fumbling experiment. For Lacourière is not merely a printer; his reproductions of Picasso's and Rouault's paintings are proof of his capabilities. They come as near the

originals as is possible in another medium and without him Rouault's magnificent colour illustrations could never have appeared, unless reproduced by some photo-mechanical process. To do these he has revived an old trade technique of aquatint, called the sugar process. Normally an aquatint is made by covering the whole surface of the plate with aquatint ground and stopping out the whites with varnish and subsequently the tones as the biting proceeds. To reproduce a painting, where the actual brush strokes must be rendered, would be next to impossible by this reverse process. With the sugar solution, however, the artist can paint the successive tone of each colour on the copper and bite it to whatever depth is required. By making a plate for each colour, or two colours in the same range, he can reproduce a painting in oil or gouache with about four plates.

By this method Lacourière has reproduced paintings by Rousseau, Picasso and Rouault which can be seen in this exhibition. He is nothing if not conscientious and each proof of the reproduction, as it proceeds, is submitted to the artist for criticism. Rouault is so chary of being disturbed that, when Lacourière wants his approval of a proof, he refuses to give his address and makes a rendezvous at the café where he usually breakfasts. There, while eating, making running commentaries on the iniquities of the waiters and the characters of the clients, he criticizes the proof submitted, and, pulling odd ends of pastel out of his pocket, reinforces a red here or tones down a blue there until the result meets with his satisfaction.

One day when Picasso was at the studio Lacourière showed him the sugar process. Picasso immediately saw the possibilities and the result was the magnificent series of thirty-one aquatints for the *Histoire Naturelle*, of which four examples can be seen here. In fact without Lacourière and the sugar process it is safe to say that these aquatints would never have been made. The whole range of Picasso's etchings show that he prefers the most direct statement, setting down in a few lines what he has to say and leaving it at that. It seemed odd, to anyone knowing his work, that he should have taken the infinite pains that such plates would have required had the normal aquatint process been used. But once the principle of the sugar process is grasped they fall into line with the rest, infinitely enriched by the variety of tone and texture. His aquatints for the *Gongora* poems are even more direct and more obvious examples of the sugar process. To Lacourière also must go the credit for the reproduction of Picasso's handwriting, a simple matter—like Columbus' egg!

But Lacourière is not only ready to put his knowledge and technique at the service of such men as Picasso and Rouault. He is anxious to help

younger and unknown artists to the best of his ability. The very fine colour aquatint by Latapie was this artist's first attempt after a demonstration by Lacourière. And there are few men of his calibre who would trouble to give demonstrations during a month's holiday in London to anyone who cared to learn, as he did at the Anglo-French Art Centre this year. When a student came up to him one day disappointed at the result he had obtained on a plate, Lacourière said, 'Don't worry. . . . *Tant qu'il y a du cuivre il y a de l'espoir*'. It is in fact one of the great advantages of copper over wood that there is always hope of turning out a good print so long as the other side of the plate has not been reached! The most distressing errors can be scraped and burnished away provided the artist is not afraid of hard work.

Lacourière was called back suddenly at the end of his holiday to see Matisse about printing the plates of another book. His readiness to be of service to younger artists is shown by the fact that he was willing to leave the complete exhibition, which had already been on show at the Anglo-French Art Centre for a month, to the Arts Council for a long provincial tour. These prints, all of which were printed in Lacourière's studio, are in most cases illustrations taken from books and are consequently irreplaceable. It was not therefore a decision lightly made, but if the interest and enthusiasm they are bound to arouse inspires any British artists, especially of the younger generation, to use any of the techniques for their own fuller artistic development, Lacourière will be more than satisfied.

JOHN BUCKLAND-WRIGHT

TECHNICAL NOTE

As there is a good deal of confusion in the use of the terms 'Engraving' and 'Etching' it may be useful to start with a definition. ENGRAVING, though strictly applicable to line engraving, may be loosely applied to all intaglio processes; that is where the polished surface of a metal plate, generally copper, zinc or steel, is cut, scratched or etched with lines, dots, indentations or pitted areas which are intended to retain the ink, after the surface has been wiped, and so reproduce on dampened paper forced into them by a press, the intended design.

These intaglio processes fall naturally into two groups; those where the hand of the artist produces the actual cuts or indentations, such as line engraving, stipple, drypoint and mezzotint, and those which are etched or bitten by the chemical action of different acids on the metal, such as etching, soft ground etching and aquatint.

Though all intaglio processes may be called engravings in that the surface of the plate is engraved either by hand or by chemical action, only the second group where acid is used can be called ETCHINGS. But for the sake of clarity it is as well to confine this term to its normal meaning of reproductive line drawing with an etching needle, of which a description is given further on.

One of the reasons why the terms 'Engraving' and 'Etching' are used so loosely is that many prints are the result of combined processes, as for instance the reproduction of Rousseau's painting of the Snake-charmer, where line engraving, mezzotint, etching and aquatint have all been used to obtain the desired effect. Wherever such combinations have been used in the prints shown in the exhibition the different techniques are given in the description or notes to the exhibits.

The difference between the intaglio process and woodcuts or wood engravings is that, whereas in the former it is the portions sunk below the surface of the plate which are inked to give the impression, while the surface is wiped, in the case of woodcuts it is the surface which is inked and which forms the design. Those portions of the surface which are not required to print are cut away leaving the drawing in relief. This process is known as relief printing and is shown in the colour woodcuts by Derain and the raised white line in the line engravings by Roger Vieillard.

LINE ENGRAVING is made by cutting the surface of the plate with a

burin or graver. The burin is a small bar of highly tempered steel, square or lozenge-shaped in section, fitted into a handle and sharpened to needle fineness. The under surfaces, or belly, of the tool must be kept true, parallel and sharp or the result will be ragged cutting, slipping or the breaking of the point. It should be sharpened on fine carborundum or aloxite and finished on arkansas stone. An occasional wipe on 'blue back' or very fine emery paper will keep the point sharp while working. The burin should be held with the handle against the palm and the blade between the first finger and thumb, and driven in line with the forearm. This was the hold used by engravers up to the seventeenth century. The movement comes from the shoulder, not from the wrist, and in making curves the plate is turned rather than the hand. By increasing the angle of attack and applying more pressure, deeper and wider lines may be cut. The burin, properly used, is capable of making lines of infinite variety and is the most beautiful and direct method of producing sensitive and expressive line. It is, however, a tool requiring decision and discipline. There is no room for hazy conceptions and tentative approach. Dots and triangular cuts may also be made and colour and relief can be given by placing lines of varying thickness and quality in close relation. Blacks may be obtained by this method and there is, therefore, no necessity for crosshatching. The burr raised by the passage of the burin through the metal may be removed with a scraper. Line engravings may be printed as clean as a visiting card but, generally, a very slight tone left on the surface gives transparency and colour and serves to tie the ink lines to the paper and so give unity.

The print should have an astringent and sparkling or decorative and expressive linear quality. Usually the nearer it approaches its origins of the decoration of precious metals the more effective will be the result. The early Florentines down to Mantegna offer the best field for study and the prints of Roger Vieillard are a modern flowering of this often neglected period. Later the technique was developed with incredible virtuosity but less aesthetic content until it was finally debased into a purely reproductive process for copying oil paintings. Line engraving is, by its nature, admirably suited to book illustration, its decorative and decisive character according better than any other intaglio process with the design of type. Its only disadvantage, that of having to be printed on a special press, is shared with all other intaglio processes.

DRYPOINT is merely scratching a design on a copper plate with a steel, diamond or sapphire point. Lightly used the point will give a grey line, but if forced into the metal it turns up, on one side or the other or even on both

sides, a ridge of copper according to the way the point is held. This ridge is called the burr and when present retains far more ink, after the plate is wiped, than the line itself and prints as a heavy velvety black. All drypoint is extremely fragile; the grey lines quickly wear away and the burr breaks off or is worn down by the action of printing. Most drypoints have to be steel-faced if they are to print more than a dozen copies and the prints themselves are apt to vary if the wiping is not repeated in the same manner for each print. Wiped in one direction the burr may hold a lot of ink and in another considerably less. Apparently simple, it is full of pitfalls for the beginner but it is capable, properly used, of producing very fine prints. It is often used in conjunction with etching to reinforce and give colour.

For MEZZOTINT the whole surface of the plate is roughened with a 'rocker' till, if printed, it would give a rectangle of dense black. The artist reduces the tiny indentations of the roughened surface by scraping them down and thus producing lighter tones. The whites are not only scraped down but polished with a burnisher so that they will not retain any ink when printed. The only use of mezzotint in this exhibition is on the body of the Snake-charmer in the reproduction of Rousseau's painting, where it is responsible for the dense black.

ETCHING is the commonest of all the intaglio processes. By drawing with a needle or steel point on a plate covered with a bitumen and wax ground the surface of the metal is exposed. The plate is then subjected to the chemical action of acid, which bites or etches the plate where the needle has left it unprotected by the ground. The depth of the lines can be controlled by 'stopping out' those which are sufficiently bitten with a coat of varnish which protects them from the acid. The plate must be first thoroughly cleaned from all traces of grease with whiting and methylated spirit or ammonia. It is then heated and covered with the ground, known as etching ball, which is dabbed over the surface and reheated to even it up. While still hot the plate is blackened over a lighted taper so that subsequent work on the plate will be clearly visible. The design may be traced on the blackened ground by means of a coloured carbon and is then cut through the ground with a needle sharp enough to lay bare the plate without scratching the metal. To do this the needle may be blunted by gently rubbing it on a stone till it will pass over the surface of the metal easily without catching. The plate is then bitten by immersion in a bath of acid or by applying it with a swab tied to a stick, in which case the applications must be continued as the acid dries or loses its power. If placed in a bath the edges and back of the plate must be varnished to protect them from the acid. Diluted nitric is often

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used, probably because it is easier to see the progress of the biting by the bubbles of gas formed by the action of the acid on the metal. Its disadvantages are that it burns fingers and clothes and the fumes are poisonous. Unless weak it bites raggedly and fast and quickly finds weaknesses in the ground and is apt to lift it between closely spaced lines. The large majority of prints in the exhibition were etched with perchloride of iron whose action is slower and more even than nitric. This acid or Dutch mordant must be used for aquatint and soft ground etching. With perchloride of iron the lines blacken as they bite, but the progress can be controlled by looking at the depth through a 'linen tester', a small powerful magnifying glass on a stand.

When the lightest portions of the design are sufficiently bitten they are stopped out with varnish and the remainder allowed to continue biting. This procedure is continued until the deepest blacks have been bitten. The ground and varnish are then removed with petrol and methylated spirit and the plate cleaned, inked and printed.

Etching, though in a sense purely a reproductive medium, is capable of producing prints of the greatest beauty. The complete freedom it allows the artist and the variety of tone obtained by massed lines and variation of biting are responsible. The etched line is by its nature lacking in variety and cannot be compared to the expressiveness of line engraving, but variety is obtained by touch and drawing. A good example of this can be seen in the magnificent illustrations for the *Georgiques* by Segonzac. The freedom it allows the artist is also responsible for a spontaneous graphic quality as for example in the etchings of Matisse for the poems of Mallarmé.

In SOFT GROUND ETCHING the bitumen and wax ground is mixed with vaseline or tallow so that it does not harden but remains capable of taking an impression. Owing to its greasy nature it is not necessary to clean the plate before laying the ground which is put on the heated plate with a roller. A thin piece of paper is put over the plate and the drawing made with a pencil. When the paper is lifted the ground adhering to the underside will expose the surface of the plate in a design which reproduces the lines drawn through the texture of the paper used, the lines being stronger or weaker in proportion to the pressure. The effect is the reproduction of a pencil line, when bitten, and a good example is to be seen in the illustration for Cinderella by Pascin reproduced from a pencil and wash drawing by Lacourière. If a tracing from a drawing is used this will have to be reversed so as to come out the right way when printed. In this case it is advisable to cover the plate with two pieces of thin paper, one with the tracing upon it and the other to

take up the ground. A slow biting acid must be used such as perchloride of iron or Dutch mordant. Good examples of soft ground etching can be seen in Cotman's and Turner's etchings.

Flat textures can be obtained with soft ground by putting paper, silk, gauze or other materials over the grounded plate, with a sheet of smooth paper on top, and running it through the press. Where the flat textures are not wanted they can be stopped out before biting.

AQUATINT is used for the production of tones or tints on a plate. The ground is generally laid in the form of resin dust which is blown up inside a box and allowed to settle on the plate. The larger grains drop first, the smallest remaining in suspension for some little time. The moment at which the plate is put into the box will therefore determine the coarseness or fineness of the ground. When heated gently over a methylated spirit burner the dust melts and forms a porous ground through which the acid can attack the metal and so etch the surface with a myriad tiny cavities. These hold the ink and print any tone from the lightest grey to black according to their depth. The usual method is to lay the aquatint ground over the whole plate and stop out all the whites by covering them with varnish before biting the plate. If the whole plate was subjected to the action of the acid for a sufficient length of time it would of course print as an even black. The action of the artist in stopping out first the whites and subsequently the greys as the biting proceeds means that he is working with white on black. This is often perceptible in aquatints and is in certain respects a disadvantage. Aquatint, however, is very often used with etching so that the white on black effect is not always noticeable.

SUGAR PROCESS AQUATINT is the reverse procedure to normal aquatint in that the artist can work with black on white instead of white on black. A 'lift ground' is used made of three parts black gouache, one part gamboge watercolour and a lump of sugar. This should be mixed to an agreeable consistency for painting but should not be too thin. The plate is first cleaned, as though for laying an etching ground, and the design painted on the copper with the sugar solution. When this has completely dried a thin varnish is painted over the whole surface and allowed to dry. This varnish is best made of bitumen powder and petrol. When dry the plate is immersed in water; this causes the sugar to swell and lift the varnish off the plate leaving the design in bare metal while the rest of the plate remains covered with varnish. An aquatint ground is then laid over the whole plate and subjected to the acid. Except on the design, where the sugar has lifted the varnish this aquatint will of course have no effect, but the design exactly as the artist

painted it will be bitten to whatever tone is desired. The acid can be applied in two ways; either the plate can be put in an acid bath and in this case the back and edges must be varnished, or the acid can be painted on and renewed until the biting is complete. This latter method was used for the Picasso illustrations for the *Gongora*. Perchloride of iron is used at a strength of one part acid at forty-five per cent to five parts water for biting the tones. For the full blacks of the *Gongora* full strength acid at forty-five per cent was required. Tones are, of course, stopped out as they are bitten or they may be scraped and burnished down much as in mezzotint. Another method is that used by Picasso for the plates for the *Histoire Naturelle* by Buffon where the greys were bitten first, the plate was then cleaned and the sugar process carried out all over again for the blacks.

COLOUR AQUATINT such as that employed by Lacourière for reproducing the paintings of Picasso and Rouault is produced by the sugar process. Taking, for instance, the painting of the Head of Christ by Rouault for Baudelaire's *Fleurs du Mal*, a key plate was made of the black portions of the picture. This can be traced by placing a sheet of gelatine or transparent celluloid over the original and drawing with a needle. The lines so made are filled with a little whiting and the sheet is reversed on a copper plate covered with a little grease or a light varnish. The sheet is rubbed over with a burnisher and by so doing the whiting is transferred to the surface of the plate. The lines are then scratched lightly in with a drypoint. This serves as a guide for the sugar process and the black portions of the painting are thus obtained in aquatint on the key plate. This plate and the four colour plates are placed together and pinholes are bored in two places through the whole five of them, generally in some part of the design where they will not show in the final print. This is necessary to obtain the correct register when printing one plate on top of another.

The key plate is then printed and, where the impression of the register holes occur in the print, holes are made with a pin. The second plate, which will carry the first colours, is laid on the press, the fresh print put over it, the holes in the print registering exactly with the holes in the plate, and printed. The surplus ink from the print will be found deposited on the clean plate, which is dipped for a few seconds in very weak perchloride. This oxidizes the plate where it is unprotected by the ink and when cleaned an exact reproduction of the key plate, in reverse tone, will be found on the new plate. As the key plate gives the main lines of the drawing, thus serving as a guide, the sugar process can be used for painting in the first one or two colours. They can either be drawn by eye or traced from the original. When two are

used they should be in the same range and sufficiently separated to allow printing without the danger of running one colour into another. The light and strong tones of each colour are obtained in various ways as described above. This procedure is repeated for each colour plate until all the colours necessary for the reproduction of the original have been obtained.

Coloured inks are made from powdered colours mixed with two-thirds linseed and one-third burnt linseed oil. Light and heavy copperplate oils can be used in the same proportions, or two parts light and one part medium, according to the consistency preferred. The colours should always be put on by hand, not with a dabber, and cleaned off in the direction necessary to avoid mixing with any other colour on the same plate. When inked and wiped the whole plate may be gently rag-wiped. Inking a plate with two or more colours obviously requires a certain amount of practice.

As each colour plate is printed the prints are placed on top of each other with tissue paper between and allowed to rest for an hour or two before being printed with the next colour. They should not be redamped, but if necessary a damp sponge may be passed lightly over the backs.

COLOUR WOODCUTS. The normal European method of producing a colour print from woodblocks is to cut a separate block for each colour and print them one over another, using coloured printing inks with an oil basis. It has been found, however, that when more than a few colours are used there is a tendency, especially when the colours are superimposed, for the result to become overloaded and unpleasant. The technique has not, therefore, found much favour and when used successfully the colours have generally been restricted to a minimum.

The colour prints of Derain are, therefore, a revelation. They contain variations of colour and tone which would be impossible to obtain by the normal method without a great expenditure of labour and materials. By using carefully selected colours in flat masses, separated by a white line, he achieves a magnificent series of brilliant colour harmonies with the simplest means.

The outline design is drawn on the block in reverse, cut with a knife or fine gouge and the background, where necessary, cleared away. The block is then ready for colouring. A soft brush is used, the different colours applied to the selected areas and the block printed on damped paper before they have had time to dry. The colours used can be either coloured printing inks or oil colour. In the latter case it may be necessary to add a little burnt linseed or strong copperplate oil to prevent the colours from running. In both cases it is of course possible to use any gradation of colour or tone. The block can

be painted as though it was a picture in flat tints. The colours can be thinned with turpentine to the right consistency and a different brush should be used for each colour.

For the printing of the *Pantagruel* illustrations Lacourière used a small army of girls to do the work of colouring which is longer and more delicate than it would seem at first sight. Derain supplied a sample proof of each block and the colours were specially made to the exact shades. After the blocks were printed and dry, a light watercolour wash was passed over the whole area of the print. This is an important factor in giving atmosphere and unity and helps to differentiate the print from the rest of the page.

CATALOGUE OF PRINTS

ANDRÉ BEAUDIN

1. DANCERS. *Etching.*

Beaudin is known for his lightly bitten grey etchings (*la manière blonde*) with which he illustrated *Les Bucoliques* of Virgil. Skira, Paris 1936. This print shows a further development with increased depth. The delicate lines, bitten with perchloride of iron, should be contrasted with the harsher line, given by nitric acid in the etching by Borès, No. 4.

2. THE GARDEN. *Colour etching.*

Four plates used, red, blue, yellow and green. Each of them over- or under-print all the other plates in different parts of the final proof.

3. COMPOSITION. *Colour aquatint.*

The design was cut with a burin on the black or key plate and two colour plates were made, the first for the light grey on the left and the yellow on the right, the second for the blue. The greys on the black plate are used for over-printing. They are obtained by light biting and should be compared with the grey ink used on the left.

3a. HERDSMEN AND GALLUS. *Etching.*

This is the *manière blonde* referred to in the note to No. 1.

3b. SHEPHERDS AND TITYRUS.

F. BORÈS

4. VINTAGE DANCE. *Etching.*

Nitric acid was used for biting this plate instead of perchloride of iron used by Beaudin in No. 1, and almost invariably used by Lacourière for aquatints.

ANDRÉ DERAÏN

Illustrations for *Pantagruel* by Rabelais. Skira, Paris 1946.

5. PANURGE and page 49. *Colour woodcut.*

6. THAUMASTE and page 109. *Colour woodcut.*

7. LA DAME DE PARIS and page 129. *Colour woodcut.*

8. VILLE DES AMAUROTÉS and page 169. *Colour woodcut.*

Each illustration is printed from one block coloured by hand. The design is cut in white line and the background cleared. The colours are applied separately to each portion with a brush (the brush strokes are sometimes visible in the print).

A. DUNOYER DE SEGONZAC

Illustrations for *Les Georgiques* of Virgil. This work, commissioned years ago by Vollard, will be published by the artist.

9. CERES. *Etching.*

10. GOATS and a page of text. *Etching.*

11. LANDSCAPE and title page with seated figure. *Etching.*

Undoubtedly one of the greatest masters of etching. No other artist can translate the heat and atmosphere of the south of France so perfectly with such economy.

These prints are typical of French ideals in printing. They believe that the whole effect should be obtained by what is on the plate. Atmosphere and dramatic effects obtained by trick wiping, leaving portions of the plate more heavily inked than others, are anathema.

PIERRE FALKÉ

12. PERSPECTIVE OF THE DOCKS OF THE PORT OF BREST. *Etching and stencil colouring.*

The stencil or '*pochoir*' process is often used in France for colouring illustrations. Stencils are cut to fit the exact area of each colour or tone and the colours, either watercolour or gouache, are brushed in by hand.

13. *Left.* FRONTISPIECE. Illustration for *L'Ancre de Miséricorde* by Pierre Mac Orlan, Paris 1945. *Etching and stencil colouring.*

Right. TITLE PAGE. Illustration for L'Ancre de Miséricorde by Pierre Mac Orlan, Paris 1941. Etching and stencil colouring.

JEAN FRELAUT

Illustrations for *Monsieur des Lourdines* by Chateaubriand. Paris 1944.

14. *Left. TITLE PAGE with trees. Etching and drypoint.*

Right. THE CAB. Etching and drypoint.

15. *Left. THE WOOD. Etching and drypoint.*

Right. LANDSCAPE. Etching and drypoint.

It is often difficult to distinguish etching from drypoint especially when the artist has used both on one plate, as is here the case. The drypoint line is distinguishable by its soft grey effect where the point has been lightly used and the velvety blacks, where a strong burr has been raised by forcing the point into the metal. The etched line is 'drier' by comparison and lacks variety.

EDOUARD GOERG

Illustrations for *Le Livre de Job*. Éditions du Seuil, Paris.

16. CROCODILE and HIPPOPOTAMUS, with page of text and tailpiece. *Etching.*

17. *Left. TITLE PAGE with rainbow. Etching.*

Right. TREE, FIGURE, etc. Etching.

Goerg's magnificent blacks are extremely difficult to print. Deeply bitten they often contain a few points of light. It is difficult to give these their proper value while retaining the full amount of ink, in the biting round them.

ROGER LACOURIÈRE

FRANÇOIS CLOUET

18. *Left. MARY STUART. Colour aquatint made for the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, from the original drawing.*

Right. FRANCIS I. Colour aquatint made for the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, from the original drawing.

The drawing is photographed on to a copper plate covered with sensitized gelatine and exposed to the light. Where the gelatine is protected from the light by the drawing it remains soft and can subsequently be washed away leaving the copper exposed. The gelatine unprotected by the drawing hardens into a protective film. An aquatint ground is then put over the exposed portions of the plate and bitten lightly with perchloride of iron. The result provides a basis on which to proceed and the plate is then worked on with successive bitings until the strength and variety of the original is obtained. The plate is then inked and printed. Only one colour plate was used for the first reproduction. Owing to the added depth of colour in the face of Francis I a second colour plate was aquatinted to carry the yellow.

LACOURIÈRE-SERVEAU

19. MAP OF PARIS, showing the old ramparts. *Colour aquatint.*

Three plates used, two for the colours and one for the black. For the details, figure work and printing, etching and line engraving were used.

JULES PASCIN

20. CINDERELLA. Illustration for *Cendrillon*. Trémois, Paris 1929. *Etching and colour aquatint from a pencil and watercolour drawing.*

Soft ground etching is used for the pencil line. Two plates were used for the colour aquatint and very lightly bitten to obtain the effect of colour wash. Sandpaper is used in the sky to give the effect of pencil shading.

PABLO PICASSO

21. CRAYFISH. *Colour aquatint from a painting.*

22. DOLORES. *Colour aquatint from a gouache painting.*

The aquatint bitings are less pronounced to give the effect of gouache as opposed to oil colour.

GEORGES ROUAULT

23. AUTUMN. *Colour aquatint from a painting.*

24. CHRIST ON THE CROSS. *Colour aquatint from a painting.*

25. THE BAY OF THE DEPARTED.
Colour aquatint from a painting.

For Nos. 23-25 Rouault produced the black key plates and Lacourière was responsible for the colour plates.

26. HEAD OF CHRIST. Illustration for
Les Fleurs du Mal by Charles Baudelaire. *Colour aquatint* from a painting.

27. Prints from the different plates aquatinted to obtain the full effect of No. 26.

- (i) Red Plate (A) only.
- (ii) Green and Yellow Plate (B) only.
- (iii) Blue and Mauve Plate (C) only.
- (iv) Black Plate (D) only.

28. A proof of Plates A, B and C (No. 27) superimposed.

It will be seen from the above proofs that more than one colour can be printed from one plate at a time. The different colours on a plate should, however, be in the same range as far as possible, though it is possible to print a red among a lot of green, providing it is sufficiently separated. The question is whether it is possible to wipe the plate properly after inking without smudging one colour into another.

29. (i) THE LITTLE DWARF. Illustration for the *Cirque de l'Etoile Filante*. Volland, Paris. 1938. *Colour aquatint* from a painting.

- (ii) Black Plate only.

30. Prints from the different plates aquatinted to obtain the full effect of No. 29.

- (i) Red and Yellow Plate (A) only.
- (ii) Green and Blue Plate (B) only.
- (iii) A proof of Plates A and B.

HENRI ROUSSEAU

31. THE SNAKE-CHARMER. *Colour aquatint* from the painting in the Louvre Museum, Paris.

Three plates were used in this case, two for the colours and one for the black. A careful study of the print will show that etching, line

engraving and mezzotint have all been used to obtain the desired effect. The aquatint was scraped away in many places to give gradations. Mezzotint was used on the figure of the Snake-charmer.

LATAPIE

32. BATHER. *Colour aquatint*.

The first attempt in the medium by a young painter. Four plates were used, a red, a yellow, a blue and a sepia. In various parts of the print they all overprint one another. A scraper was used in the sky to obtain variety of texture.

LOUIS MARCOUSSIS

33. *Right*. COMPOSITION. *Colour etching*.

Three plates were used; one for the reds and yellows, one for the browns and the last for the black. Marcoussis ran a school of engraving and etching in Paris before his death and this plate shows his masterly handling of tone and colour values.

Left. A proof of the two colour plates of the above etching.

Only the black has to be added showing that the black is often the most important plate. In this case there is a great deal of overprinting. It is interesting to note the holes bored in the plates (in the white to the right centre) made for the purpose of obtaining an exact register.

HENRI MATISSE

Illustrations for *Poésies* by Stéphane Mallarmé. Skira, Lausanne 1932.

34. *Left*. DANCING GIRL. *Etching*.

Right. PROW OF A SHIP. *Etching*.

35. TWO GIRLS. *Etching*.

36. HEAD OF A GIRL and page of text. *Etching*.

Connoisseurs of book production sometimes object to copper-plate illustrations on the ground that the plate-mark, surrounding the etching, is unsightly. It is avoided in this case, and in the illustrations of Picasso, by using a plate larger in area than the paper.

For these etchings Matisse used a blunt bullet-headed sapphire point which he got in Switzerland. He uses it with such force that it makes a furrow in the copper with raised ridges on either side, which, of course, remain after the line is bitten. In consequence, when wiping the plate in the process of printing, a circular movement must be used to prevent the ridges retaining the ink and giving a blurred or drypoint effect to the proof.

PABLO PICASSO

Illustrations for *Histoire Naturelle* by the Comte de Buffon. Fabiani, Paris 1942.

37. *Left. BABOON. Sugar process aquatint and etching.*

Two bitings were made on this plate. The scraper was used on the greys and whites of the body and its serrated marks can easily be seen. The etching needle was used for the surrounding line and the hairs on the body. Where the baboon's leg comes against the black the hairs were stopped out with varnish on the aquatint ground. Sandpaper has been used in the sky to give added tone.

Right. FROG. Sugar process aquatint and etching.

Again two bitings used. The scraper and burnisher have been used for lightening darks in various places.

38. *Right. OSTRICH. Sugar process aquatint and etching.*

In this plate the two separate bitings are clearly distinguishable; the first for the greys and the second for the blacks, which are obviously bitten on top of the greys.

Left. RAM. Sugar process aquatint and etching.

Two bitings. The sky has been scraped and burnished down to a very light grey. Picasso's virtuosity in using anything available to achieve his effects is seen in the use of his finger for suggesting wool.

Illustrations for *Poèmes de Gongora. Éditions des Lettres Françaises, Paris. In preparation.*

The poems are written out in Picasso's own calligraphy decorated and interspersed with full-page illustrations. The text is also printed at the end of the volume for those who find difficulty in deciphering Picasso's magnificently decorative hand.

39. *Left. HEAD OF A GIRL facing right. Sugar process aquatint.*

No etching is used in these plates. The lines are drawn with a pen and sugar solution.

Right. Page of text: SONATO BURLESCO. Decorations in sugar process aquatint and line engraving.

The text is aquatinted on to the plate by the same process as that used for the reproductions of the Clouet drawings (see No. 18). Picasso writes the poem in black ink on a sheet of thin white paper which is placed face downwards on a copper plate, covered with sensitized gelatine, and exposed to the light. The action of the light hardens the gelatine except where the writing protects it, where it remains soft and can be subsequently washed off thus exposing the copper. The writing, in reverse, is thus left as free copper which is covered with an aquatint ground and bitten.

The white outline of the woman is drawn with a brush and varnish in the aquatint ground. The decoration on the left is line engraving.

40. *Left. HEAD OF A GIRL facing left. Sugar process aquatint.*

The variations in the hair are obtained by biting the plate with a brush full of acid instead of the more normal acid bath. When the grey in the hair has been bitten it is left and full strength acid is applied to the blacks.

Right. Page of text. Decorations in sugar process aquatint and line engraving.

The procedure is the same as for the preceding print. The outline of the foot is line engraving.

SUZANNE ROGER

41. *TWO WOMEN. Etching and aquatint.*

42. *METAMORPHOSIS. Etching and aquatint.*

The aquatint on this plate shows very clearly the gradations of tone obtained by stopping out the aquatint ground in the process of biting.

ROGER VIEILLARD

Illustrations for *L'Hommage à Rimbaud* by J. Tardieu. Éditions du Seuil, Paris.

43. *Left. FIGURE AMONG TREES. Line engraving.*

Right. STARS ABOVE THE CITY. Line engraving.

These are excellent examples of the variety of line and tone obtainable with line engraving. Vieillard follows the purer technique of Mantegna and the early Florentines rather than that of Dürer. His darks are obtained by direct deep and close cutting rather than cross-hatching. The raised whites are obtained by

gouging out a deep line, which is carefully cleaned after the plate has been inked and wiped and ready for printing. The pressure of the press forces the damp paper into the cleaned line so that it remains raised and cleaner than the surrounding surface on which a slight film of ink is purposely left. All techniques are permissible when successful, as in the case of the figure among the trees in No. 43 *Left*. But, as a general practice, the combination of intaglio (line engraving) and relief printing (the raised white line) is open to question.

44. A series of plates demonstrating the *sugar process*.

- (i) Copper plate painted with sugar solution and varnished.
- (ii) Copper plate showing sugar solution lifted.
- (iii) Copper plate showing aquatint ground over lifted sugar solution.
- (iv) Copper plate etched with aquatint, and burnished to obtain tones.

45. A series of prints from plates shown in No. 44.

- (i) Print from aquatinted plate in black, before burnishing (No. 44, iii).
- (ii) Print from No. 44, iv.
- (iii) Print from final state of plate in blue and green. 'The Girl and the Unicorn'.
- (iv) Print from final state of plate in yellow and red. 'The Girl and the Unicorn'.

46. Woodblock and print, demonstrating the method employed to reproduce Derain's illustrations for *Pantagruel* (Nos. 5 to 8).

- (i) Woodblock with design engraved, background cleared, and coloured ready for printing. When printed the light tones are apt to come out darker and the dark tones lighter than expected.
- (ii) Print from the block in colours. 'The Virgin and the Unicorn'.

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